

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Statewide Road and Bridge Policy

Governor Mitt Romney

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Statement of Policy. It shall be the policy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in all programs involving work on streets, roads and bridges, to:

1. ***Fix It First:*** To give priority to the repair of existing streets, roads and bridges; and
2. Use ***Community-Friendly Solutions (Communities First):*** Wherever a street, road or bridge needs to be re-designed and reconstructed, to plan and undertake, in collaboration with the affected community, a “context-sensitive” project -- one that fully protects and enhances the surrounding community and landscape while addressing mobility for all transportation modes.

Purposes. The purposes of this policy are to

- Prevent sprawl;
- Recognize all the Commonwealth’s citizens and communities as its transportation agencies’ customers;
- Avoid the costs associated with unnecessary road widenings and the conflicts they entail, and thereby use available funding to complete more projects in more communities and to produce more construction jobs; and
- Provide enhanced mobility for sustainable transportation modes (walking, bicycling, and public transportation).

Actions. The Chief of Commonwealth Development and Secretary of Transportation and Construction are hereby directed to take the following actions to implement this policy.

1. The *Highway Design Manual* and any other relevant standards, guidelines and policies of MassHighway shall be reviewed and revised to incorporate the principles of context-sensitive design, traffic calming, and multi-modal accommodation. An advisory committee consisting of representatives of municipalities, regional planning councils, and other affected interests shall be formed to help guide this process, and ample opportunity for input from the general public shall be provided. The process of revising the manual and any other standards, guidelines and policies shall be completed by October 1, 2003.

2. Projects with community-friendly design that can be undertaken immediately using existing funds shall be identified by MassHighway as quickly as possible, and no later thirty days from this date, and implemented immediately thereafter.

3. An ombudsman shall be appointed in the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction and have responsibility for hearing and facilitating the resolution of citizen and community concerns regarding project design. In addition, a process for expediting project review and requests for waivers from current design standards and guidelines, and requests for exercise of flexibility in applying current design standards and guidelines, shall be established within MassHighway and overseen by the Secretary of Transportation and Construction. All documentation regarding waivers shall be made available for public review.

4. All actions taken pursuant to this policy shall fully honor the letter and spirit of provisions in the Massachusetts General Laws requiring the accommodation of bicycle and pedestrian traffic, including chapter 90E, section 2A. Where there are differences of opinion concerning the necessity or desirability of widening pavement, eliminating curbside parking, or taking other measures to accommodate bicyclists and/or pedestrians, full use shall be made of creative design expertise and public involvement, facilitation or dispute resolution processes.

5. A plan for repairing or reconstructing the state's structurally deficient bridges shall be developed and finalized, in consultation with the Commonwealth's municipalities and metropolitan planning organizations, by July 1, 2003. This plan shall address all the state's bridges, including in particular those owned or controlled by the Metropolitan District Commission, Department of Environmental Management, and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority as well as other agencies. It shall include a budget and a schedule for completing the bridge repair and reconstruction process.

The statewide bridge plan shall include a maintenance and management program designed to protect our assets, make them function better for motorists and other users, and minimize the need for future reconstruction or expansion projects. This maintenance and management program shall address basic maintenance issues (painting, de-icing practices, and so on). It shall also include (1) an improved pavement management system and (2) strategies for optimizing the operation of the system to avoid more costly capacity expansion projects. Such strategies shall include: (a) Improving signage so that travelers can more easily tell where they are and where they are going; (b) Scheduling of construction to avoid peak travel periods on key roads whenever feasible; (c) Improving incident response systems; and (d) Using multimodal transportation strategies to the maximum extent feasible both to reduce traffic congestion and to enable more travelers to bypass congestion by using non-highway modes.